



Information Bulletin

Governor's Office of Emergency Services Law Enforcement Branch

P. O. Box 419047

Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9047

The Threat of Terrorism: Internal Issues for Local Law Enforcement

November 1, 2001

By
Michael Guerin, Chief
Law Enforcement Branch

During this time of increased concern over the potential for additional acts of terrorism, our office has been asked: "What can my department do to better prepare?" This bulletin will attempt to review some initial steps that each law enforcement agency can take to prepare their department and the community. In order to serve the community, your local government leadership, including that of your department, should ensure that a sound foundation exists. This foundation should help your community's ability to govern and provide services should a terrorist event occur in your area.

How safe and secure are your government facilities, including law enforcement sites? Now is a good opportunity to review your physical security, and that of other local government buildings. While it is still important to allow public access to some portions of government facilities, ensure that adequate safeguards and perimeter protection exist to deter, deny, and detect those that might intrude into secure areas.

Has your agency developed and updated a line of succession? If one or more key command officers became casualties, there should be a pre-determined list showing succession that would occur immediately, in order to assure an orderly command and control process, i.e., Chief, Patrol Captain, Services Captain, day watch Lieutenant, etc. In the event of a major emergency, even with the loss of multiple command staff members, leadership is assured if such a process is already in place.

INFORMATION BULLETIN: Terrorism – Internal Issues

November 1, 2001

Page Two

Are your agency's vital records, both electronic and paper, secured? Is there off site storage and/or duplicate copies for key documents, reports and fiscal data? What if there were a fire or other emergency that destroyed your building? Now is the time to consider contingencies for the storage of vital records. Also, now is a good time to consider alternatives to ensure that you can still deliver law enforcement services, even if a facility is lost to use due to an act of terrorism or a natural disaster. If the main police facility were damaged or destroyed how would your department continue to provide services to your community or clients? Recently, due to fires, one county sheriff's department had to be completely evacuated, including the county jail. How would your agency handle this and still provide services to the community?

What are your alternatives should your 911 and communications facilities become unavailable? In one large California city, a hazardous materials incident caused the immediate evacuation of the 911 PSAP and radio dispatch center. While enhanced 911 systems include transfer provisions for the call-taking function, how would your agency's personnel receive assignments and communicate without a functioning communications center? Consider or review plans for alternatives now. Many agencies rely on a mobile command post as a key alternative. If so, do you park this next to your main facility? Might it be better to locate this vehicle off site to avoid potential collateral damage?

Most agencies have "just enough" equipment even on a good day. What if an incident or natural disaster caused damage to many of your key resources? What if 10% of your vehicles were suddenly lost to you? What if one or more of your mobile repeater or trunking repeaters were knocked out at once? How capable would your agency be to continue providing law enforcement services? Now is a good time to consider your system and equipment vulnerabilities and set out options for reconstituting them. Unfortunately, the events on the east coast have shown us, dramatically, the need to plan for not just redundant facilities and equipment, but also the need to assure that personnel are cross trained. New York agencies lost key personnel that were experts in their specialties. Ensure that your department does not depend on any one individual for the exclusive knowledge in any one area. Rotate key personnel so others also "know how." Cross train backup personnel that can step into key functions should the primary become unavailable.

Once you ensure your internal capability is sound and resilient, you can turn your attention externally to the community you serve. If we can be of help in contingency or consequence planning, contact one of our experienced peace officers at (916) 262-1744.